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ANSWER

TO A LATE

Theology
Band 1

DISCOURSE

OF

Dr. *RUTHERFORTH's*,

ENTITLED,

*Determinatio Quæstionis Theologicæ
post Gradum Doctoratus, Habita
Cantabrigiæ in Scholis Publicis.*

By J. EDWARDS M.A. of Magdalen
Hall in Oxford.

Magna est Veritas & prævalebit.

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. and P. KNAPTON in Ludgate-
Street. 1746.

[Price Six-pence.]

THE NEW YORK

CO. OF

ADVERTISING



Printed by J. B. Edwards, No. 10, Nassau St., N. Y.

1875

Price 25 cents

LONDON
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THE Discourse I undertake to examine is intituled, *Determinatio Quaestionis Theologicae post Gradum Doctoratus Habita Cantabrigiae in Scholis publicis*. The Author Dr. *Rutherford*, Fellow of St. *John's College, Cambridge*, and of the Royal Society. As I did not with Dr. *Stebbing*, so neither do I presume myself qualified to contest with this celebrated Disputant, except in Virtue of my Cause, which I trust will be found fully sufficient to supply the Defects of its Advocate.

The learned Doctor begins his Piece with observing ; " that the *Jewish* Prophets fre-

“quently instructed the People, not only by
 “Words, but Actions; by which means they
 “more strongly excited their Attention, and
 “made a deeper and more lasting Impression
 “on their Memories than mere Words would
 “have done^a.” Now I will presume, on the
 learned Doctor’s leave, to ask him the fol-
 lowing Question: Whether it be his Opi-
 nion, that this way of communicating Know-
 ledge would have been attended with the
 same Effects in later Ages? I believe he will
 not say that it would. For had this been the
 Case, our Saviour would not have made such
 constant Use, as he did, of Parables in all his
 edifying Conversations with the *Jews*, but
 have exhibited his Meaning by apt Actions.
 But this Difference must be owing to some
 Circumstances peculiar to the times in which
 the Prophets lived, who thus engaged the
 Attention of those to whom they were sent,
 and made them more apt to remember the
 Messages which they delivered to them.
 What those Circumstances were, I believe
 the ingenious *Dr. Rutherford* knew as little
 of as the Generality of his Readers, till *Mr.*
Warburton explained them. Which I will
 give in his own Words. “LANGUAGE
 “(saith he) was at first extremely rude, nar-
 “row, and equivocal, so that Men would
 “perpetually be at a Loss on any new Con-

^a See *Det.* pag. 1.

"ception, or uncommon Adventure, to ex-
 "plain themselves intelligibly to one ano-
 "ther. This would naturally set them on
 "supplying the Deficiencies of Speech by
 "apt and significant Signs. Accordingly in
 "the first Ages of the World, Commerce
 "was upheld by a mixed Discourse of Words
 "and ACTIONS. And Use, as in most other
 "Circumstances of Life, improving what
 "arose out of *Necessity* into *Ornament*, this
 "Practice subsisted long after the Necessity
 "had ceased, especially among the *Eastern*
 "People, whose natural Temperature in-
 "clined them to a Mode of Conversation,
 "which so well exercised their Vivacity by
 "Motion, and so much gratified it by a per-
 "petual Representation of material Images^b.
 "Of this we have innumerable Instances in
 "holy Scripture." Several of which Mr. *War-*
burton proceeds to enumerate; and some also
 from prophane History. And, I think, it
 had been more for the Doctor's Credit to
 have acquiesced in this Account, than to
 have strained for others of his own invent-
 ing with so little Success, as plainly appears
 from what has been already said.

We meet with nothing more of Argu-
 ment against his Adversary, till we come to
 the third Page, where he thus expresses him-
 self. "Because Mr. *Warburton* thinks this

^b *Divine Legation*, vol. i. pag. 81.

“ a mighty Argument, that not only the
 “ Prophets, but also God made Use of this
 “ Method of Instruction ; let us therefore
 “ consider more attentively the Nature and
 “ Force of scenical Actions ; which stand in
 “ need of Words to make them understood.
 “ There are but few Gestures of our Bodies,
 “ which are more apt to express our
 “ Thoughts, than Sound and Speech. They
 “ have no natural Power of signifying, but
 “ if they have (any of them) any Meaning,
 “ it must be derived from the arbitrary Ap-
 “ pointment of Men ; and it is not to Ac-
 “ tions, but to Words and articulate Sounds,
 “ that Use and Custom has annexed Ideas.”

The learned Doctor appears here to confound
 two things, *Gesture and Action*, and affirms
 the same of both, equally false, but not false
 in an equal Degree. What ! have the Ge-
 stures of the Body *no natural Power* of sig-
 nifying ? That Barbarian knew better who
 demanded the Pantomime of *Augustus* to be
 his Interpreter to the neighbouring Nations
 of differing Speech and Language. And so
 too did *Roscius*, who durst undertake to
 express the same thing more ways by Ge-
 sture, than *Cicero* could by Words. He is
 not much less mistaken in the matter of Ac-
 tion, as appears by the following Instance of
 the last *Roman* King, who when his Son sent
 a Slave to him to enquire what he should
 do with respect to a certain People, over
 whom

whom he had gained supreme Authority, gave him no other Answer, but only took the Messenger into his Garden, and there cut off the Heads of all the tallest Poppies.

Speech has not only from the earliest times been the constant way of Men's expressing their Thoughts, but without all Question is the fullest and most commodious for that Purpose, as the learned Doctor has with much Eloquence displayed in the next Paragraph^c. But does he think it follows from hence, against all Reason, and all Records, both sacred and prophane, that Men's Discourses did not often consist partly of Words, and partly of Actions in the rude Ages of the World?

“*Adam* (he observes) gave Names to “Beasts, and told God that he heard his “Voice in the Garden, and being naked, was “afraid, and hid himself from him^d:” But what then? Does it follow from thence, that then, or even for some time after the Confusion of Tongues at *Babel*, Men were as capable of expressing their Minds on all Occasions by Words, as they are now all over the civilized Globe? It is as certain, as any thing of that Nature can be, or needs be, that for a long time after those Periods, Language had not sufficient Stores for this Purpose.

^c Pag. 4.

^d Pag. 4.

He tells us, “ that, after *Abraham*’s time, “ scenical Actions could not be understood “ without being explained by Words;” and endeavours to prove this Assertion. Dr. *Stebbing* had said the same thing before; and had been told that it was nothing to the Purpose. For that the Author of the *Divine Legation* shews, that what passed between God and *Abraham*, previous to the Command to offer his Son, explained to him the Nature and End of the Transaction, and made him very capable of understanding every Particular of it, without the Intervention of a single Word.

But the Doctor thinks there was no such previous Introduction to the Command; because *Moses* is altogether silent in it^f: But ought he not to have taken some Notice of the Reason Mr. *Warburton* has assigned for this Silence? However as he has not thought fit to do this, so neither need I. But only crave Leave to ask him, whether it be his Opinion that the Doctrine of Man’s Redemption by the Sacrifice of *Christ* was anywhere clearly revealed in all *Moses*’s Writings? I suppose so learned a Divine will say that it was not; it being yet only a Light shining in Darkness, and not comprehended by it. There was then some good Reason why it should not be openly exposed to the *Jewish* People in general. But if so, the

Consequence will be, that *Moses* could not record that Introduction which would have made the Transaction as full and clear a Discovery of Man's Redemption, and the manner of it to them, as it was then to *Abraham* himself, or to the Christian World afterwards. But tho' Mr. *Warburton's* Reasoning should fail, I hope St. *Paul's* Authority will hold, who says; *seeing then we have such Hope, we use great Plainness of Speech, and not as Moses, who put a Veil over his Face, &c.* Which, I think, implies that *Moses* purposely hid some things relating to that Hope, which Christianity reveals.

Whoever attentively reads his Bible, and observes the Connexion between the Old and New Testament, must conclude these two things, 1. That it was necessary that *Moses* should record the Doctrine of Man's Redemption. 2. Equally necessary that that Record should be involved in Types and Shadows. The Reason of this Conduct Mr. *Warburton* has explained at large^b. And yet the Scope and Result of the Doctor's Argument is neither more nor less than to invalidate this Necessity by asserting, rather than attempting to prove, that what *Moses* does not mention, he never thought of. Which, to say the least of it, is a way of concluding,

^a 2 Cor. iii. 12.

^b See *Divine Legation*, vol ii. pag. 608.

that will carry him much farther than I dare say he will care to go. But so he can find Arms against his Adversary, he seems not to heed whom they hit besides. Otherwise he might have seen, that if his Argument, or Assertion, call it what you will, affects Mr. *Warburton's* Interpretation of the Case of *Abraham*, it falls full as heavy, and with better Execution, on all these Types and Adumbrations of the great Events of the Christian Dispensation, which all sensible Christians are persuaded to be in *Moses's* Writings, and which many Fathers, and Priests, and Prophets of the *Jewish* Nation, certainly well understood, tho' *Moses* has no where plainly revealed the Antitypes which were prefigured by them. I did not indeed think so able and sober a Disputant was capable of so weak and pernicious an Argument.

But it is of small Importance what Dr. *Rutherford*, or any other Man, imagines *Moses* should have told us, if the Nature of the Command was such as is explained in the *Divine Legation*, when the Author of that Book has proved, both from the New and Old Testament, that such was its Nature.

Let me add, that Dr. *Rutherford* himself confesses that the Transaction did refer to and prefigure the Death and Resurrection of *Christ*ⁱ. Does he think then God would not destroy two abominable Cities, without first

ⁱ In fine.

acquainting *Abraham* with the Cause, and yet would command him to sacrifice an innocent Son without acquainting him with the End? Is not this a strong prejudice in Favour of Mr. *Warburton's* Interpretation; unless it can be shewn that there was some good Reason for God's concealing the End from *Abraham*, or at least some orthodox Tradition that in Fact he did so?

But Mr. *Warburton's* Interpretation of the Command cannot possibly stand with *Moses's* Account of it, who makes it to have been given with Design to try *Abraham's Faith*. "For how could God (so the Doctor expresses himself) know whether *Abraham* " would prefer his Duty to God, before his " paternal Affection for his Son, if the whole " Affair was disclosed to him before he undertook to transact it? Or what Possibility was there of trying his *Faith*, if, before he set himself to perform the scenical Action, he understood that his Son was to be released from Death^k?" But tho' God did (as Mr. *Warburton* maintains) reveal the Cause of the Command to *Abraham*, he did at the same time believe that God was in earnest when he gave it. And in Consequence of a well-grounded Faith, which only is rational and commendable, he immediately addressed himself to the Execution of a Task so harsh to Nature, without the least Reluc-

^k Page 11.

tance, or Hesitation. For he believed that the same God, who had thus enjoined him to deprive his Son of Life, could restore it to him again. Which exactly agrees with what the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* tells us of this Matter. By Faith *Abraham*, when he was tried, offered up *Isaac*,—accounting that God was able to raise him from the Dead¹. Now if the Author of this Epistle thought that *Abraham's* Confidence that God would raise his Son from the Dead was no Diminution of his Act of Faith, why should Dr. *Rutherford*? But because Faith and Reason have their different Provinces, there are some who set no Value but upon a Faith which exceeds all Reason; as there are others who despise all Reason which does not exclude Faith.

“ Well, but the Command was a *Temptation*; and no *Temptation*, St. *Paul* tells us, “ is for the present joyous, but grievous: But “ you (*viz.* Mr. *Warburton*, for with him “ only the Doctor had told us he engages) “ but you bring in *Abraham* exulting for “ Joy that he should see the Day of *Christ* “ by sacrificing his Son; and consequently “ the Command could be no *Temptation* to “ *Abraham*^m.” Here the Doctor strangely misrepresents his Adversary's Doctrine, who makes the Joy spoken of to be the imme-

¹ Chap. xi. 17. 19. ^m Page 11.

diate Consequence of God's promising him to give him the desired Sight, and not to be raised by God's commanding him to sacrifice his Son in order to that End. But I do not need to insist upon this. I never before heard that every *Trial* of a Man (for a Temptation is but another Word for a Trial) carries with it Grief and Trouble. And I am surprised that the learned Doctor should ascribe so absurd an Opinion to an inspired Author. *St. Paul*, in the Passage quoted by himⁿ, speaks only of Afflictions, which he calls by the general Name of Trials. But if they are in their own Nature grievous, it does not follow, that all other Temptations are so. But how happens it, after all, that Afflictions and Joy are so inconsistent that they can never meet in the same Subject? It must be when they arise from the same Cause. Worldly Joy indeed excludes worldly Grief. Religious Joy excludes religious Grief. But sure religious Joy is very consistent with worldly Grief; or how came it to pass that *St. Paul* so much exulted in his Chains^o? I suppose these to be always grievous to the natural Man. Why then will you allow less to the Patriarch than the Apostle? And because it was grievous to him to offer up his

ⁿ Heb. xii. 11.

^o Acts xvi. 25. *St. James* bids us count it Joy when we fall into diverse *Temptations*. James i. 2. Our Saviour, to rejoice and be exceeding glad, when we are grievously persecuted for his Name's Sake.

Son,

Son, that it was not joyous to him to see in that commanded Action the Redemption of Mankind? The common plain Principles of practical Divinity shew all that is here said to be incontestible: Yet shall all this and as much more be given up rather than you will admit an Interpretation not to be found in the common Systems of speculative Divinity.

For my Part I cannot perceive that the Doctor does, throughout his whole Performance, even so much as seem to prove any thing: But I ascribe this to the badness of his Cause, not of his Abilities, which without doubt are capable of great Matters. Here he only lies behind the huge *Telamonian* Shield of Dr. *Stebbing*, whom he follows Step by Step, and hackneys over his Arguments with recovered Vigour; for the one's false Paces only make the other move the faster. Thus we are told again, that that Passage of Scripture which Mr. *Warburton* makes the Introduction to his Proof, is the necessary and only Foundation of it^p; and what is worse, that it is laid in Sand. He says that Mr. *Warburton* "does
 " not prove, but take it for granted that the
 " Word DAY, when our Saviour says to the
 " Jews, *Abraham rejoiced to see my Day,*

^p See pag. 15. *Quanquam certo scio te virum inprimis sapientem, cum intelligas totum hoc argumentum verbis Christi perperam interpretatis niti, &c.*

" and

“ and he saw it and was glad, signifies the
 “ Office and Employment of *Christ*; which
 “ they (says he) will deny, who have learnt
 “ from *St. Peter*, that the Prophets, after hav-
 “ ing foreseen the Office of the Redeemer, and
 “ the Glory which was to follow his Suf-
 “ ferings and Death, nevertheless earnestly
 “ desired to know when these thing should
 “ be; *i. e.* (saith the Doctor) to see the Day
 of *Christ*”. This is *Dr. Stebbing’s* Argu-
 ment. To which *Mr. Warburton* answered^r
 that the Question was not what the Word *Day*
 might be employed to signify elsewhere, but
 what it signified in the Text in *St. John*.
 And this Signification he fixes (in *Divine Le-*
gation^s) by considering the Occasion on which
 our Saviour uttered the Word. Which was
 his having said, *if any Man keep my Com-*
mandments, he shall never see Death: Inti-
 mimating thereby the Virtue of his Office of
 Redeemer. And therefore tho’ the Word
Day, considered alone, may either signify
 the Office of Redeemer, or the Period of
 our Saviour’s Existence; or any how refer,
 in general, to the Time of his coming to
 bless Mankind; yet it is plain it is *here* to
 be understood in the first of these Senses. *Je-*
sus telling the *Jews* (no more than was to
 be found in their Scriptures) that their Father
Abraham was pleased with a Sight of that

^q Pag. 13.

^s Pag. 593.

^r See Remarks, p. 2. p. 15, 16, 17.

Redemption, and rescuing of Men from Death to Life, he was now come to perform. The more we consider this Matter, the more sensible shall we be of the Pertinence of our Saviour's Argument thus interpreted. And that to every plain Man will be instead of a thousand slender School-Demonstrations. The Doctor, it may be presumed, was very conscious of this, and therefore dissembled his Knowledge that Mr. *Warburton* argued at all on this Head. Which I believe the Reader will not look upon as any great Proof that Dr. *Rutherford*, with all his Ingenuity, and Art, was able to make even a plausible Answer.

If (argues Mr. *Warburton*) *the figurative Word DAY signifies our Saviour's Office, it must denote the peculiar Circumstance thereof; and consequently must denote his laying down his Life for the Sins of Men*^t. The Doctor does not deny but that this Consequence does hold with respect to True-Believers. But the *Socinians*, he saith, are not obliged to admit it; against whom Mr. *Warburton* so confidently applies his Interpretation of the Case disputed on^v. But surely this Consequence is equally good and unexceptionable with regard to this Sect of Christians, as to any other, if the Death of *Christ* for our Sins be with them as much the Characteri-

^t *Divine Legation*, p. 593.

^v Pag. 13, 14.

stic Circumstance of the Salvation of Mankind. And that it is, cannot be gainsayed; since (in the Words of Bishop *Stillington*, who quotes *Crellius* for what he says) the *Socinians* "attribute our Salvation to the "Death of *Christ*, as a Condition intervening, upon the Performance of which the "Covenant was confirmed, and himself taken "into Glory, that he might free Men from "the Punishment of their Sins^x."

Never any thing was more unjust than the learned Doctor's telling his Readers that Mr. *Warburton* has only, Oracle like, asserted, and not so much as offered at any Proof, that the Word *Εἶδε*, in this Text, signifies seeing literally^y. Surely he either wilfully shut his Eyes to, or kept them off from Mr. *Warburton's* Book. Did he never read, or has he forgot, among others, that Argument drawn from the *Jews* Answer to our Saviour, from whence it appears, that they understood him of personal beholding^z? This Argument Mr. *Warburton* particularly insists upon, and largely defends in his Answer to Dr. *Stebbing*^a.

But tho' the learned Dr. *Rutherford* thus blameably passes over Mr. *Warburton's* Proof,

^x *Stillington concerning the true Reason of the Sufferings of Christ*. Chap. xi. § 1. ^y Pag. 13.

^z *Divine Legation*, p. 593. at Bottom of the Page.

^a Remarks, p. 2. p. 23.—27.

that the Word *Εἶδω* means beholding sensibly in our Saviour's Use of it in this Passage, he will yet disprove his other Assertion^b, that *Εἶδω* always signifies a full Intuition by these Words of the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*; ἀλλὰ πῶς αὐτὰς ἰδόντες. As if any Word might not be so qualified by others joined to it, as to lose much of its natural Signification!

If he had told us not that Mr. *Warburton* had not proved, but that he did not need to prove that *Εἶδω*, in this Place, means to see sensibly, he had then indeed said what is very true. For Mr. *Warburton* has made it appear, by the Detail which he gives us of *Abraham's* History^c, that the Redemption of Mankind by the Death of *Christ*, was nowhere in any manner revealed to *Abraham*, but in the Command to sacrifice his Son. And therefore he needed not (directly) to have insisted on any more from this Text than that our Saviour affirms, that *Abraham* was some way or other informed of his Sacrifice for the Sins of Men.

The Doctor sums up the Force of all that he had hitherto advanced in one terrible Dilemma^d: With this he pushes hard and fore.

^b See p. 14, 15.

^c See *Divine Legation*, from page 569 to page 608.

^d See pag. 15.

But

But having already shortened his Horns, we have nothing to fear from his ill Humour.

But if he has failed of overturning Mr. *Warburton's* Interpretation; he will destroy one of the excellent Uses he raises upon it. I take little Delight in exposing a learned Man. And therefore shall not dwell on his strange Mistake in making the whole of Mr. *Warburton's* Answer to the Infidel's Objection to consist in this Assertion, "That the offering of *Isaac* was not a Sacrifice commanded, but a scenical Representation of a Sacrifice^e." Mr. *Warburton*, with a Judgment and Accuracy worthy of him, divides the Unbeliever's Objection into three Parts. To the second of which alone, that considers the Action as a Sacrifice commanded, it is that he opposes this great Truth, "That he has shewn it to be no such thing, but only the mentioned Representation of the Sacrifice of *Jesus*, from whence it follows that it has no moral Import; but (says he) the Formality of that Action which has no moral Import, is seen no ways to affect the moral Character of the Agent^f." This Assertion the Doctor (whether with greater Fairness, or Attention to Mr. *Warburton's* Words, and the Scope of his Discourse, let the Reader determine) makes the same as saying, that

^e See pag. 15.—18.

^f *Divine Legation*, p. 617.

“ tho’ an Action be ever so vile in itself, yet
 “ if it be done to represent somewhat else, it
 “ loses its Nature, and becomes an indiffe-
 “ rent one.” But to set him right in this
 Particular, let him consider the following Il-
 lustration. A Set of Actors represent the Con-
 spiracy of *Julius Cæsar* in the Senate-house.
 Now I say that representative Action has *no*
moral Import. The Favourers of *Cæsar*’s
 Cause could never call them Enemies of their
 Country, nor could the Favourers of Li-
 berty call them Patriots. But if in this
 feigned representation, instead of acting a
 fictitious Murder, they committed a real one
 on the Person representing *Cæsar*, who ever
 denied but that this Action had a *moral Im-*
port? But then consider the Representation
 here ceased, and the Persons who committed
 it acted in their real, not fictitious Character,
 being actuated by Malice, Vengeance, &c.
 and waited only the Opportunity of that Re-
 presentation to perpetrate their Design. In-
 deed the Parallel here varies. The real Death
 of *Isaac* is supposed to make Part of the real
 Representation. And this perhaps was the
 thing (if the Doctor did indeed ever consi-
 der the matter so deeply) which misled him.
 But he should have considered that the Au-
 thor of the *Divine Legation* employs this

Observation of a scenical Representation's having *no moral Import* to free the Command from the Infidel Objection of its being a commanded *Sacrifice* (such a thing being supposed greatly to discredit Revelation as giving too much Encouragement to the Pagan Practice of human Sacrifices) not as its being a *commanded Death simply*. For to justify that, the Author of the *Divine Legation* would confide only in the common Argument brought by Divines of God's sovereign Right over his Creatures, regulated on his infinite Justice and Power, &c. Which a common Share of Candor would have enabled the learned Doctor to understand from the following Words of the *Divine Legation*. "Where was the Temptation to violate any Principle of Morality in all this? The Law of Nature commands him to cherish and protect his Offspring. Was that transgressed in giving a Stroke, whose hurt was instantaneously to be repaired? Surely no more than if the Stroke had been in a Vision. The Law of Nature forbids all Injury to his Fellow-creature. And was he injured, who, by being thus highly honoured in becoming the Representative of the Son of God, was to share with *Abraham* the Rewards of his Obedience^h?" He

^h Pag. 619, 620.

had, in the Beginning of his Dissertation, thus expressed himself; “after saving and reserving to ourselves the Benefit of all those Arguments hitherto brought to support the History of this Command; which Arguments I really think of great Weight and Validityⁱ:” And here, therefore, he adds (*expressly*) only what arose out of his own Interpretation.

But this, the Doctor tells us, “has no peculiar Advantage to boast, nothing that could remove *Abraham’s* Doubt of the Author of the Command to deprive his Son of Life, unless God, at the same time that he gave it, satisfied him not only of the Design with which it was given, but moreover how the Affair would end.” Which Objection, I think, is more astonishing, almost, than any other part of his Discourse. For that *Abraham* understood that his Son, at the worst, was not to lie longer in the State of Death than the Son of God himself (over whom Death hath no Dominion) would, is as plain, both in Mr. *Warburton’s* Dissertation in the *Divine Legation*, and in his Answer to Dr. *Stebbing*, as the plainest Words can possibly make any thing^k. But, what is more, the Man who makes

ⁱ Pag. 590.

^k See *Divine Legation*, p. 519. and *Rem. p. 2. p. 119. p. 122.*

this

this Objection, is the very Man, who, in Effect, gives this Answer to it by objecting so much against Mr. *Warburton's* Interpretation because it lessens the Temptation of the Command: For the only way he could suppose it to lessen the Trial was by *Abraham's* having been made acquainted with the Design, which would lead him to conclude that *Isaac* could not remain under the Power of the Grave.

The last thing the Doctor does, and the only thing he does effectually, is to tell his Reader that he has executed what he proposed, and shewn that Mr. *Warburton's* Interpretation is either false, or of no Use. In Imitation of him, tho' I hope to better Purpose, I shall briefly recapitulate what I have performed in my *True State of the Controversy between Mr. Warburton and Dr. Stebbing concerning the Case of Abraham justified*; and in this *Answer to Dr. Rutherford*. The short Sketch I drew at the Entrance of the first of these Tracts of Mr. *Warburton's* Proof of his Interpretation of the mentioned Case, plainly exhibited it standing on some other Supports besides those which are placed in his Sense of that Text in *St. John*, that Dr. *Stebbing*, in his *History of Abraham justified*, represents as the main Evidence, and Dr. *Rutherford*, in the Piece now examined, following Dr. *Stebbing's* first Performance

formance on the Subject, as the necessary and only Foundation of it. And therefore even that rude Draught alone is enough to shame the Cause, and confute both its Advocates.

I exposed the learned Archdeacon's strange and most ridiculous Pretence, that Mr. *Warburton* had given up one Part of his *Thesis*, when he was endeavouring to defend it. And shewed that he proved his Allegation by such Reasons, as, if good, would make the holy Scripture to be that very Nose of Wax the Papists make it: By such as might force our Articles of Faith and Religion to speak the Language of the Council of *Trent*; and even convert the *Bible* and *Alcoran* into one another.

I opposed and confuted (either directly in the very Place where it stood, or where that was not necessary, in some other Place where I had Occasion to give the true Sense of that Passage of Scripture on which the Objection turned) every Argument by which he endeavoured to confute the other Part of Mr. *Warburton's Thesis*. I did not indeed always trouble my self or Reader with every Cavil employed to supply his want of Weight, by Number. For what I undertook to shew was, that all Mr. *Warburton's* Proofs of his Interpretation, and the Deductions he drew from them, stood firm, and unimpaired by the utmost Efforts of his Adversary. And this, I think, I have discharged,

discharged, which I should have left to the Reader's own Observation, had I met with that Candor from some, which a Man who writes only for the Sake of Truth and Religion has Reason to expect from all.

Dr. *Stebbing* is certainly a very learned Man, and is particularly famed for his great Skill and Experience in the Art of Disputing, which Opinion I profess, and always did, to have, tho' Mr. *Warburton* indeed thinks him the most contemptible Reasoner that ever was. But if a Man had the Abilities of an Angel, as they could not make a bad Cause a good one, so neither could they make a bad Defence of it a good one. And a good Defence of a bad Cause would not be an Excellence in Dr. *Stebbing* which I should envy him, how much soever I admire him. In a Word therefore, I thought I had a Right, as one professing Letters, to examine the Weight of his Logic, and that it was my Duty, as a Divine, to oppose what was injurious to an Interpretation, which, in my Opinion, does Honour to the sacred Scriptures.

But let the Doctor's Arguments be what they would, his Character in the learned World, and the Church, demanded a suitable Respect: And this I endeavoured to shew him. And if any thing escaped me inconsistent with that Regard, I hereby heartily retract it. And as a Proof that I was not dis-

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posed to offend again in the like kind, I offer the present Discourse in Answer to Dr. *Rutherford*, to the Reader's Consideration, where I have with as much Civility as Brevity, confuted his false Reasoning, shewn it to disagree with Antiquity, Scripture, and common Sense; nay even with that established System of old orthodox Theology which he takes so much Pride to be the professed Defender of. That almost all his Arguments are borrowed from Dr. *Stebbing*, which having been before exposed, needed very little trouble to set them in a true Light.

In a Word, the only Difficulty that now remains is, that two such Writers of Credit as Dr. *Stebbing* and Dr. *Rutherford*, and so sincerely attached as they are to the Interests of Revelation, should ever take it into their Heads to write against an Interpretation that affords so noble and striking a Proof of the Connexion and Dependence between the *Jewish* and *Christian* Religion; and especially that they should write against it with so much Acrimony and Resentment.

Did the Author of it deserve this Usage for saying, that in the common Interpretation (which we all know is a merely human one, and he hath shewn to be a wrong one) there were unsurmountable Difficulties thrown in the way by Freethinkers and Unbelievers? Happy would it be for us if this
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was the only human Interpretation of a Scripture Fact that did afford such Advantages to the common Enemy. But this is not to be expected. We ought rather to admire and adore the Providence of God, that there are so few Difficulties as we find there are. Those which Mr. *Warburton* speaks of have Place only in the hitherto received Interpretation of this Text. And by removing this false Foundation of them, he has given the Infidels a fresh Occasion to reflect on a Truth they are difficultly brought to learn; that these Difficulties arise rather from their Ignorance and Prejudices than from any Defects in the Books themselves.

The Difficulties arising from the common Interpretation were not such indeed as affected our Faith: Yet the Solution of them arising from Mr. *Warburton's* gives a new and striking Confirmation of the Divinity of the *Mosaic* Writings.

On the whole therefore I think my time extremely well employed and agreeably to my sacred Function, in taking off the false Colours which its last learned and ingenious Adversary had laid on the Face of vulgar Error, imposing, for ought I know, as well on himself as his Reader.

F I N I S.



